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## Dear WES Parents and Carers

Welcome to our April edition of the WESPA newsletter. Read on for the latest news, how to get the most out of life at WES, dates for the

diary and more. If you'd like to contribute, please don't hesitate to get in touch by emailing [williamellispa@gmail.com](mailto:williamellispa@gmail.com).

Team WESPA

For all previous issues, please visit [sites.google.com/view/williamellispa/news](https://sites.google.com/view/williamellispa/news)

## Spotlight

The email signature of this WES teacher contains the Roald Dahl quote: "The more risks you allow children to make, the better they learn to take care of themselves." Which is a pretty clear statement of intent! We caught up with **George Court**, owner of possibly the best job title a teacher could have: 'Head of Adventure'.

### *Who are you and what do you do at WES?*

My name is Mr Court and I am the Head of Adventure and Outdoor Education here at school.

### *What does a regular day for you at WES involve?*

Let's talk about my day whilst on camp at The Mill, William Ellis' centre for outdoor learning in Dorking. It will usually start at around 5:45 am when I will get out of my tent, come inside for a cup of coffee and prepare for the day.

Chances are, that at this point of the day, there will already be a few boys up and eager to get out of the tents. Breakfast is prepared by the brilliant wardens at The Mill, Sam and Alice, and will be served by 8am.

Activities for the day will then follow shortly. We will do the likes of the low ropes, a walk up Leith Hill, water sports and a day trip to Littlehampton where we will visit the castle and arcades on the beach. Then back to The Mill for some free time, dinner, evening activities and into bed by 12 ready to do it all again the next day.



William Ellis boys on DoE expedition to the beach

### *What fun things have happened recently or are coming up for the Adventure Department?*

Earlier on in the year we were able to run a couple of DofE (Duke of Edinburgh Awards) bronze trips for some of our year 11 cohort. We took them to The Mill to complete this two-day expedition with all 35 boys passing with flying colours.

Coming up, there are plans to take students on to their silver award, travelling to areas of the UK. I will also

be taking a small group of year 7s to Hereford to partake in a week-long residential at 'Jamie's Farm' as part of the BerthaEarth project they've been taking part in.

The BerthaEarth Foundation is an environmental organisation working with young people to grow a diverse network of young environmental leaders, storytellers and change-makers who reignite a love for our planet. Following a 12 week-long program of

after school sessions, 12 boys have been invited along to the retreat to put what they have learnt into action.

### *What is the best way for our boys to get involved in outdoor activities at school?*

The best way for our boys to get involved with outdoor education is in PE. Each year group's outdoor education curriculum is specifically tailored to their end of year camp – leading to the DofE walk in year 9. During the

Continued on page 2

## Spotlight

Continued from page 1

spring and summer term for year 10 and 11 there will be DofE trips and after school sessions for the boys to be able to go through some of the knowledge and key skills that they will need to be able to take part in such trips.

This is only just the beginning – should the boys continue on to LaSWAP (along with other students from the consortium) they will be able to then partake in the higher levels of the award, Silver and Gold. The opportunities these awards provide and open doors to is endless, getting the boys more involved in clubs they attend, and in the community around our school and where they live.

*Tell us something fun we might not know about you!*

I myself have only recently moved to London. I came from North Yorkshire following COVID to come to WES. Being based now in London, it has given me a great opportunity to visit another part of the country, going on adventures as much as I can.

*Thank you very much George. It is great to hear more about the outdoor*



William Ellis students on their DofE trip

*activities at school and amazing that we have such a department. For any parents interested in the DofE Awards have a look at the WES page here. Aside from the trips, the award also involves a volunteering element and a skills element – a great way to give something back to the community and learn something new. And for any parents interested in heading down to The Mill themselves, the next working weekend will be 28th-30th July.*

[www.williamellis.camden.sch.uk/dofe-award](http://www.williamellis.camden.sch.uk/dofe-award)



Camping at The Mill

## School News – Out and About ...

### Key player

Alec Imamovic brought the house down with a stunning and highly accomplished rendition of the Mozart Piano Concerto No 20 in D major with Camden Youth Orchestra at LSO St Luke's. Raymi in year 8 was London Music Fund scholar of the month in March.

[www.londonmusicfund.org/news/march23-scholar-of-the-month](http://www.londonmusicfund.org/news/march23-scholar-of-the-month)



● Our under-12 Football Team have reached the quarter finals of the London Schools FA Cup

● Well done to all the students in school who have earned a pizza party and movie for their 100% attendance and high praise points!

● And good luck to those representing the school in the Junior Maths Challenge.

### Our new website

At the last WESPA meeting we decided a dedicated WESPA website would give us a little more room than the one page on the school site and would be a great way to share information. Here it is:

[sites.google.com/view/williamellispa](https://sites.google.com/view/williamellispa)

All feedback very welcome!

## Interview

# William Ellis – more than just the name. This month newsletter editor Al Mobbs chats with WES Governor and former student **Professor Daniel Monk**

Al Mobbs writes: "Since my son joined William Ellis School, I have become more and more interested in the history of the school – a history more likely found in the famous private schools of England. William Ellis was a pioneer believing in political liberalism, religious tolerance and the need to educate all children. His legacy still runs deep today and in this month's edition I spoke with Daniel Monk, William Ellis School Governor, Professor at Birkbeck College and an Old Elysian himself to find out a little more about our school and its founder.

### ***How and why did you become a governor at William Ellis School?***

I was appointed a governor by the Vice Chancellor of Birkbeck College, University of London in 2015.

That's an unusual way of becoming a governor and a legacy of the close links between Birkbeck and William Ellis which go back a long way.

Ellis was one of the early supporters of The London Mechanics' Institution, which was founded in 1823 and subsequently became Birkbeck College. It introduced the then revolutionary idea that working adults should have access to education at the highest level.

Ellis extended the idea to children – this was before education was compulsory and provided by local authorities – and at one time there were 10 'Birkbeck Schools'. William Ellis School is the only one that remains and was renamed after its founder.

Even though I was a pupil at William Ellis and have worked at Birkbeck for almost twenty years I didn't know about the connection. As an 'old

boy' I was delighted to have the opportunity to take on the role, and because my academic research is in the area of family, child and education law I hoped I'd have something distinctive to offer.

Returning to the school after more than 30 years was a bit daunting, and it was fascinating seeing what has changed and what hasn't.

### ***When you were at WES in the younger years did you have any idea you would pursue a path in academia, and did your time at WES inform your interest in families and education?***

Working as an academic wasn't something I thought about until my mid/late twenties. It certainly wasn't something planned out – which is probably and increasingly the case for lots of people. A computer careers questionnaire at school advised me to consider becoming a barrister or a chiropodist!

That said, my time at WES probably did influence later choices. I

loved English and History at school and have very fond memories of two inspiring teachers: Mr Davies and Mr Sullivan.

Family Law, my field, is really about storytelling: 'telling tales' is what lawyers do, with the aid of doctrines and rules that have complex histories and constantly change.



When you study family law you have to try to interpret and make sense of very personal individual and emotional stories – it's a good read!

More generally I think the ethos of WES encouraged us all to be curious and questioning and to be prepared to sometimes challenge mainstream ideas – all really essential skills for an academic career.

### ***What career advice would you give to the students at William Ellis School today?***

Some people have a very clear idea about what they want to do and that's fine. But I don't think it's essential and increasingly being open to having more than one career means that developing skills which can be used in a variety of jobs helps.

Sometimes you find out what you like by trying things out. So, if possible it's good to talk to lots of different people and ask them what their working days are like, what they like about their job and what they don't.

Different careers suit different people so I think it helps to have some insight into your strengths and weaknesses – we all have both – so you can play to your strengths and at the same time think about what you might need to work harder at.

Learning another language is always a great

**Continued on page 4**

Continued from page 3

asset and playing sport and making music also help develop great skills - even if you don't work in those fields - not least how to get on and work effectively with other people.

Being curious and asking questions and reading widely also help you whatever you end up doing. Employers in most sectors are looking for people who can think creatively.

***I'm interested in the legacy of William Ellis himself. He was pretty radical! How much do you think his ideas around education influenced your time at WES and education today?***

Yes, he really was! The original Birkbeck Schools founded by William Ellis were community based, co-educational and accepted all pupils.

So, in some respects he wouldn't have recognised the WES I joined in the 1970s, which was a traditional grammar school for boys. I was in the last grammar school intake at WES and in the second year of the La SWAP sixth form.

So, the WES I joined and the WES I left were very different schools. But despite the differences I think there is a degree of continuity in the underlying ethos of the school: a commitment to providing an open minded, secular, critical education, an emphasis on personal development where what you do is more important

than your background.

The school motto, Rather Use Than Fame hasn't changed and while there are many famous Old Elysians, having a positive impact on the world and the people around us has and continues to inform the actions of many boys both in their time in the school and after.

Inevitably schools operate in political and economic contexts which create continual challenges. Ideas about Childhood also change. In my day there were no gates and Hampstead Heath was an extension of the playground at lunch and during breaks.

At the same time, it's encouraging seeing how open the boys and the school is now about talking about race, gender and sexuality and other subjects which were, at best, overlooked back then.

***Becoming a governor is just one of many ways to get involved with your alma mater. What tips would you give to other Old Elysians interested in staying connected with William Ellis?***

It's never too late to get back in touch with the school and I really do hope that boys at the school now will keep in touch after they leave.

One way in which people can help is by offering work experience to pupils or just coming in to talk to pupils at career fairs. There are lots of opportunities for mentoring too.

***As you come to the end of your term as a governor, what do you think about your own legacy and what would you like to pass on?***

As a governor you try to support the school in different ways. A lot of the time it is about listening and hopefully being a 'critical friend' being constructive but not avoiding asking hard questions.

Collectively governors make decisions about lots of things so I don't think I can point to any personal legacy. As the governor responsible for liaising with the school about careers I've tried to emphasise the importance of teaching in all subjects identifying the application of the knowledge to skills and employment.

I think there is much more that can be done - including by governors and old boys - to help raise the profile of careers. The governors have also had some interesting discussions about what is distinctive about WES as a boys school. I'm sure that is something that will be returned to in the future.

## What is WESPA?

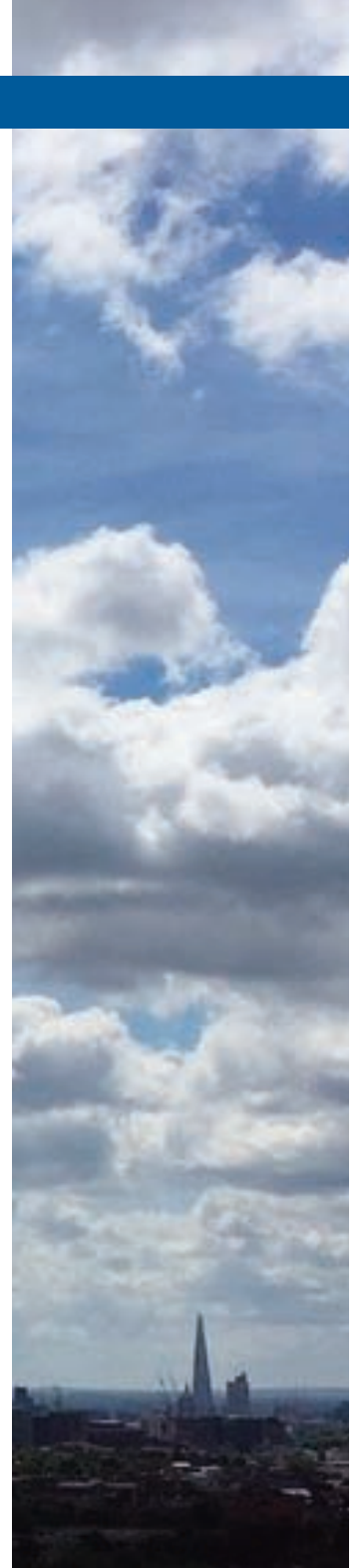
WESPA is a charity (no. 1158812), run by parents, carers and friends of William Ellis School.

WESPA is open to all in our school community, and is a fun way to get involved in school life.

- We help raise extra funding for the school, to provide resources for the boys.
- We run social events for parents and children, to help facilitate the growth of our school community.

• We encourage as many people as we can to get involved, to create stronger bonds and ties between home and school.

■ If you haven't been to a WESPA meeting yet, if you think it's not for you, or you're just not sure how you can help, you can always email [williamellispa@gmail.com](mailto:williamellispa@gmail.com) to find out more about us and how you can get involved.



## The Inside Track

Each edition we interview one of our boys to get under the hood of life at the school – from the inside. On the agenda of the first WESPA meeting Al Mobbs went to was an item on the environmental impact of our uniform. He was pleasantly surprised to see this sort of forward thinking but even more surprised and delighted to learn that the project had been written by a WES student when he was in year 7. Al spoke to **Hugo** to find out a bit more.

*When you joined William Ellis in Year 7, you did an analysis of the environmental impact of our school uniform. Why did you choose to do a project on this?*

Just before I joined the school, I had found out the environmental impacts of polyester which the school uniform is made of. So I figured I would look into it.

*What have been the biggest surprises for you throughout the project?*

I would say the thing that surprised me the most was the overwhelming support from the teachers, especially Ms Jones. The data I found during the project was also really surprising. I wasn't expecting our uniform to melt 3 cubic metres of Arctic ice every year.

*In an ideal world, what would you like to happen next?*

The entirety of the school's uniform to become eco-friendly sooner rather than later. Our generation doesn't have any more time to waste.

*As a member of the WESPA community I'm really interested in your project not just because of the immediate issues it raises but also what it stands for. Do you think there are any other areas that we could all work on together?*

We always could do better in many areas, littering being a main thing to work on, as well as damage to school equipment generally.

*What would be your advice to other WESPA students who would like to shine a light on something they care about?*

Go to a teacher, preferably Mr Pratt because he works with the school council. Make sure that you have an idea ready before you go to a teacher – you want to be as clear as possible so they have an easier time understanding what you want.

*And on a completely different subject, you have just returned from the annual WESPA ski trip. For those who might consider it next year, can you tell us a little bit about the trip and what you enjoyed the most?*

It's not a completely different subject, climate change is affecting winter and by extension skiing, so if we change our uniforms we will have more snow.

But aside from that, I would say the best part of the ski trip is getting to ski with your friends. It's also a great opportunity for people who have never skied before to learn a really exciting sport.



2023 WESPA Ski Trip



*Thank you Hugo, your work is very inspiring. If any readers would like to see Hugo's project, you can find it here:* [https://drive.google.com/](https://drive.google.com/file/d/11xlo2nk7UE8-kHWIv414iIFNDwHiZZrN/view?usp=share_link)

[file/d/11xlo2nk7UE8-kHWIv414iIFNDwHiZZrN/view?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/11xlo2nk7UE8-kHWIv414iIFNDwHiZZrN/view?usp=share_link) WESPA will be following up shortly with a consultation. Watch this space...

# New Trustees

At the recent EGM, parents present voted unanimously to elect three new Trustees.

Galit Ashkenazi-Golan, Priscilla Pinotti and Alex Booij will join Al Mobbs to form the latest incarnation of the WESPA committee.

WESPA Chair Al said: "It is very exciting to be joined by three new Trustees and I very much look forward to taking WESPA forward into its next chapter together."

"I couldn't have wished for a more lovely group to work with. I would also like to thank Azeb and Juliet for the many years of time and energy they have dedicated to the trust."



WESPA Trustees 2023:  
(l-r) Al, Alex, Galit, Priscilla

## Community choir launch

As you will know from previous emails we have started a choir.

The first rehearsal will be on 16th May at 6.30pm at WES.

It is a chance to get together, sing and have a lot of fun. It is open to all of the William Ellis adult community –



parents, carers, grandparents, staff, teachers and governors. No experience necessary and you don't

need to be able to read music. Email if you have any questions: [williamellispa@gmail.com](mailto:williamellispa@gmail.com)

## Summer Term 2023

WESPA EGM - 17th April, 7pm online – New Trustees Election

WESPA Meeting – 9th May, 7pm, School Library, Everyone welcome!

WESPA Sports Challenge: WES vs WESPA - 5th May time tbc

New parents uniform sizing

and interview day – 10th May, 3.30pm-6pm

WESPA Choir: First Rehearsal – 12th May. All welcome

New parents uniform sizing and interview day – 13th May, 8.30am-3.30pm

Working Weekend at The Mill – 28th-30th July. Let the Warden of The Mill know if you would like to volunteer: [themillforestgreen.co.uk/volunteers](http://themillforestgreen.co.uk/volunteers)



Y8 parent and Governor Hugh helping at The Mill

## Dates for the Diary

International Evening (as part of WES Culture Day) 15th June. Cooks, musicians and helpers needed! Please email [williamellispa@gmail.com](mailto:williamellispa@gmail.com)

Year 11 Leavers' Event, June at WES

New Year 7 Parents' Evening – 10th July

Uniform Swap at events throughout the term.

# Camden Foodbank



THANK YOU for all the donations for the Camden Foodbank over the winter break. Your generosity is hugely appreciated. If you still would still like to donate, cash or items can be given directly to Camden Foodbank.

Locations and opening times can be found at <https://camden.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/>

## 6 ways to support WESPA

### ■ COME AND JOIN IN! –

It is always great to meet up with fellow parents and carers and meet new ones too.

### ■ SHARE YOUR IDEAS –

WESPA is run by parents for our boys and each other. All thoughts and ideas are very welcome.

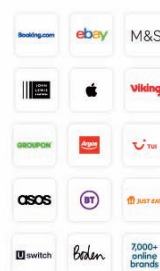
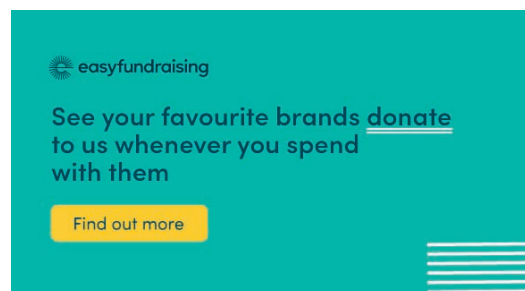
Just email [williamellispa@gmail.com](mailto:williamellispa@gmail.com)

### ■ VOLUNTEER –

The WES community is huge and diverse. Whether lending a hand at an event, joining a working weekend at The Mill, offering your professional skills to a school project, or covering one of the central WESPA roles, every contribution benefits our community and is hugely appreciated.

### ■ RUN A FUNDRAISER –

If you have any previous experience or want to



team up with a fellow parent and create something new, this is a great way to raise funds for the school.

■ **DONATE** – Donations to WESPA are very welcome. You can donate using the fundraising platform GIVEY at <https://www.givey.com/williamellisschoolparentsassociation>. If your son has outgrown his uniform please consider donating these items to our regular uniform sales. Good condition uniform can be dropped at the

school office.

### ■ SHOP THROUGH

**EasyFundraising** – If you haven't signed up yet, it's easy and completely FREE! 7,400 brands will donate to us when you use EasyFundraising to do your everyday online shopping – at no extra cost to you! Sign up here: [https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/williamellispa/?invite=1KH7PM%26referral-campaign=c2s%26utm\\_campaign=admin-trigger%26utm\\_content=srt](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/williamellispa/?invite=1KH7PM%26referral-campaign=c2s%26utm_campaign=admin-trigger%26utm_content=srt)

WESPA

William Ellis  
School  
Parents  
Association